

Fairfax County Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP)

Public Feedback Meeting | Meeting Notes

Energy

Tuesday, February 23rd, 2021

Held electronically via WebEx

Fairfax County held a CECAP Working Group Energy Subgroup meeting on February 23, 2021 from 7:00-8:30pm. The meeting was held electronically via WebEx and included a brainstorming session using Mural, an online whiteboard.

Recordings of the meeting and meeting materials [are available online](#).

These meeting notes capture the general activities conducted and discussions that occurred during the meeting. These notes should be viewed in conjunction with the presentation and meeting materials, found at the link above.

[Welcome and Overview \(Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF and Maya Dhavale, FFX\)](#)

Legal requirements: A script was read to cover several legal requirements for holding electronic meetings. The script included conducting a roll call identifying all CECAP working group members in attendance and where they were attending from. It was noted that to conduct this meeting electronically, the meeting needs to be clearly audible, publicly accessible, and compelled by emergency circumstances. It was established that this meeting could not be held in person due to the COVID-19 emergency, and that therefore it could instead be held electronically via audio-conferencing. It was also established that this meeting is necessary to move forward the CECAP Working Group's functions.

Meeting purpose: The meeting purpose was reviewed, focusing on the following four goals:

- Educate and inform you about our climate energy action plan
- Invite your individual feedback via our community surveys
- Understand your opinions, preferences, and ideas about energy strategies and activities the Fairfax County community could undertake to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Gather information to improve outreach and community engagement efforts going forward.

Additional ways to provide feedback were reviewed including the community surveys, which are open until March 14th. [Click here to respond to the surveys.](#)

Finally, Michelle Paul Heelan covered WebEx tips including how to use the chat box.

[Slides are available here.](#)

Getting to Know You (Polling) (Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF)

Michelle Paul Heelan facilitated a poll to get to know the meeting attendees, asking the following questions:

- How did you hear about this meeting?
 - Responses included via email, the Sierra Club, and the CECAP Facebook page.
- To what extent are you personally concerned about climate change?
 - Responses included very concerned, concerned, and not concerned.
- How familiar are you with the CECAP process?
 - Responses included somewhat familiar, not familiar, and very familiar.
- Where do you live within the County?
 - Responses included Dranesville, Mount Vernon, Mason, and Providence.
- In the future, how would you prefer to hear about CECAP?
 - Responses included email, Facebook, NextDoor, text, and Fairfax County's website
 - [Follow this link to sign up for the CECAP email newsletter](#)

CECAP Overview (Maya Dhavale)

Maya Dhavale provided an overview on the CECAP. The CECAP is a community-wide plan to reduce GHG emissions in Fairfax County through voluntary actions. The County is soliciting feedback from the Working Group as well as all members of the public, and the CECAP's success relies on community participation. The Working Group members are members of the public from all over the County that are working with Fairfax County and consultants to develop recommendations that will be provided to the Board. We are currently in stage 3 of the planning process, focused on climate mitigation planning and support.

She also reviewed ways to get involved as a member of the public. Fairfax County is looking for your input on how public engagement is going, how the plan and process is moving along, and feedback on the plan itself.

Energy-Related Actions (Michelle Paul Heelan and Adam Agalloco, ICF)

In this section, four actions for reducing emission from energy and buildings were introduced and discussed. These actions included:

- Major energy-saving improvements
- Smaller, DIY energy saving improvements

- Renewable and alternative energy
- Green buildings

Major Energy-Saving Improvements:

Major renovations include bigger investments, typically for homeowners, with typically a longer pay-back but a long-term reduced energy bill and enhanced comfort. Examples include adding insulation or replacement of an HVAC system.

Meeting participants responded to the following questions in the WebEx chat. [See the WebEx transcript for a comprehensive list of comments.](#)

- What would encourage you?
 - Financial savings
 - Tax rebate
 - Standardized loan application and terms
 - Lower property tax
 - Cost-sharing program
 - Reputable contractors
 - Vendor supply
 - Comfort and functionality
- What would stop you?
 - Cost prohibitive
 - Disreputable vendors
 - Lack of availability/choice
 - Level or length of disruption
 - Lack of financing options
 - Lack of data on benefits/clear choices
 - Process is too complex
 - Unclear how to assess need (don't want to create unnecessary landfill waste)

Smaller, DIY energy saving improvements

These are minor renovations or changes that an owner or renter could do to improve energy performance. Examples include lighting changeouts to LED lighting, weatherstripping around doors/windows, smart thermostats. These types of actions have a relatively quick payback from energy savings and are lower cost up-front.

Meeting participants responded to the following questions in the WebEx chat. [See the WebEx transcript for a comprehensive list of comments.](#)

- What would encourage you?
 - Knowing which items are beneficial with the least impacts
 - Information on options, supplies, and vendors
 - Cost savings

- Energy audits
- Clear how-to guides or one-pagers
- County-approved contractors at a reasonable price
- Tax-free energy efficiency purchases
- Light-bulb trade in program
- Information on the secondary benefits such as comfort or reduced humidity
- Giveaways from the county
- What would stop you?
 - Time
 - Cost
 - Complicated instructions
 - Stories of failures
 - Lack of awareness
 - Renters may lack agency/choice
 - Inconvenient or low-quality products (for example, poor-quality weather-stripping products)
 - Not knowing what the required time investment would be

Renewable and alternative Energy

Solar on rooftop is a big opportunity here, whether that is your own home or community solar. Community solar is a project where multiple people come together and own or use a shared portion of a solar project.¹ It allows people without access to roof-space to invest in solar. Geothermal is another option, which is a very high-efficiency way to heat and cool your home. These options have longer payback periods but can produce significant energy savings.

Meeting participants responded to the following questions in the WebEx chat. [See the WebEx transcript for a comprehensive list of comments.](#)

- What would encourage you?
 - Tax incentives, rebates, subsidies
 - Energy storage/resiliency benefits
 - Standardized loan application and terms
 - Ability to lease solar panels
- What would stop you?
 - HOA restrictions
 - Aesthetics
 - Utility restrictions
 - Lack of financial incentives

¹ [More information on Community Solar in Virginia is available here.](#)

- Need for quality contractor, familiar with renewable energy/solar technologies
- Too many trees
- Permitting cost too high
- Legislative restriction (max allowable solar)

Green Buildings

Green buildings are typically new construction, these are major renovations. They are intentionally designed to be environmentally friendly, with energy efficient features and decreased carbon footprints. There are several certifications that can indicate green buildings. The County already has many green buildings, including some libraries and county facilities.

Meeting participants responded to the following questions in the WebEx chat. [See the WebEx transcript for a comprehensive list of comments.](#)

- What would help you support this path forward?
 - Higher taxes
 - Student education
 - Information on costs/benefits
 - Dialogue/inclusion in forums like this one
 - Rooftop gardens/rain gardens, lighting efficiency, cool designs
 - Tax incentives
 - Awareness of secondary benefits (daylight, health, air quality)
 - Events/community meetings held in green buildings
 - Real Estate tax deductions for certified net zero ready buildings and houses
- What might get in the way of this path forward?
 - “Old school” architects/lack of integrated project teams
 - Budget concerns
 - Emphasis on up front costs as opposed to long term savings
 - Lack of leadership
 - County building standards
 - Lack of appreciation of how much energy waste we have under current building standards

Open Discussion on the Public Feedback Process (Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF)

Given the County’s constraints (i.e. budget, COVID), what is working well in this process? What could be improved?

Some responses included:

- WebEx can be more accessible for people who work.

- Would like to know more about how the County will move towards action, and when execution of the plan would start.
- Increase outreach to schools.
- Are there ways to reach out to people who are in the middle or more ambivalent (walking up to them in grocery stores, etc.)?
- Would like the opportunity to do more than share information.
- Ask more organizations to share information about meetings.

Wrap Up & Next Steps (Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF and Maya Dhavale, FFX)

Michelle Paul Heelan facilitated a brief poll asking the following questions:

- Do you intend to respond to one or both surveys (Energy, Transportation/Development)?
 - Responses included yes and already responded.
- Will you share the survey with at least three other people?
 - Responses included yes and already did.
- Is the next set of public meetings in May 2021?
 - Yes

Maya Dhavale provided an overview of the CECAP timeline and upcoming events, including monthly Working Group meetings, and the next round of Community Feedback meetings in May 2021. She also reviewed ways to stay informed and get involved, including the Community Surveys and CECAP outreach email:

- [Community Surveys](#)
- Email: cecapoutreach@fairfaxcounty.gov